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UPLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY LATINO VETERANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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NARRATOR: Luana Hernandez

INTERVIEWER: Lorene Broersma

DATE: July 18, 2017

LOCATION: Upland Public Library in Upland, California.

PROJECT: Latino Veterans Oral History Project

LB: Good morning. My name is Lorene Broersma, today is July 18, 2017. I am at the home of Luana Hernandez in Rancho Cucamonga, California, to interview Luana Hernandez for the Latino Veterans Oral History Project which is made possible by a grant from the California Humanities. And I want to thank you, Luana, for agreeing to take part in this interview about your father, Jesse Ybarra. Did I say his name right?

LH: That's correct.

LB: Thank you. Your story will be added to the Oral History collection at the Upland Public Library. So we'll get going and now we'll start off with could you provide your father's full name and where and when he was born please?

LH: His name is Jesse Reyes Ybarra, he used the middle initial "R" in all his signatures, he was born on September 18, 1916, in San Antonio, Texas.

LB: And how about your grandparents, where were they, his parents, where were they born?

LH: His mother was born in Texas and his father apparently migrated when he was very young from Mexico not sure about the dates, not sure if he was born right like on the border of Texas or Mexico. I've always heard that they were both from Texas but it's hard to know about his father. His father died when my dad was four years old and his mother took care of him and three, the three children. He had two sisters and my dad when he was growing up helped. He was about five or six years old when he started shining shoes in San Antonio, selling newspapers, doing odd jobs even working at a grocery store after school when he was going to elementary school. And then one of the stories that my dad told me was that his mother would work out of the house. They would bring in the one pound cans of coffee and they would, after they had dinner, the three, the children and the mom would cut pecans and they would sort them out large, regular pecan size, half pecans and then bits then somebody from the factory nearby would come and pick up the cans and they would pay them a nickel, a dime and 25 cents. 25 cents were whole pecans and the others were half and then bits and pieces and that's how she would make extra money to make sure that the children were fed and clothed. My dad missed a lot of school because he was embarrassed because he didn't have good shoes, didn't have the right clothing but he went and he even worked at a golf course. He would get a ride, he would go out there and he would caddy and he always told himself that someday he would play golf in one of the golf courses there in San Antonio. And he would get paid 75 cents for working the weekends and he dropped out of school and would work in the summer months he even did construction and it was back breaking for him and he said he'd never do that when he grew up he wasn't going to do that. At about

age 14 they were looking for workers for, it was called a CC camp, Civilian Conservation Corps, and he was earning five dollars a month. He would send it to the family, his mother, so that his sisters and mother could have plenty of food and he lied about his age, he was 14 but, and this was in 1933, so he enjoyed that because he became aware of his surroundings, he learned to box. When he came back to San Antonio he got involved in the amateur boxing and he eventually won the Gold Gloves for amateur boxing in San Antonio. And he also landed a job with the National Youth Corporation group and he learned through the city they paid, ah, the federal government to train and he did various jobs. He was assigned to a, ah, it was called MCI, Mexican Christian Institute, and he worked there for two years and he did different activities with the youth of San Antonio and it was similar to a boys club. Mr. Luna was his director and he really liked my dad the way he talked to the boys and to his co-workers and he was hired after funds, the federal funds ran out, he was earning $80 a month. And he was a boys leader and after school program he used to love to tell stories and he'd tell the boys the stories and then he says okay, well, I won't finish the story until you come next week and that's how he got these boys off the streets and involved in the community doing different art works, leather, woodwork carving, painting, all these different things for these 14 to 16 year old boys.

LB: Now old was he at this time?

LH: Well, he must have been in his 20's.

LB: Oh, at that time.

LH: At that time. And so each group had a different activity and during the summer months they would go camping and the boys being in a large city enjoyed going camping with a

group of people. And, ah, they would go two weeks camping and they would do weenie roasts, picnics, trips to the zoo and they even had trips to the circus and they used to do movies outdoors, they would rent movies. He married my mother in 1942 and while he, right after he married her he was drafted, 1943 which became World War II. And he did his basic training in Camp Hugh in Texas. Then he was shipped out to San Luis Obispo where he had training as a medic and there they actually were training to invade Japan because San Luis Obispo the terrain, the weather was very similar to Japan. So one of the things that, ah, when he, ah, the Black Hawk Division which dad was in was taken across the United States, they were not told where they were going the train was all blackened, they were just going and their feelings was that they were ready to invade Japan. So they traveled by train all the way to New York, they were put on a ship and then they were shipped to Europe.

LB: Oh, they did not go to the Pacific they went to Europe.

LH: The first—the first group because they were losing a lot of men and the Battle of the Bulge the invasion they lost a lot of men so these were new recruits that were being shipped. One of my dad's favorite stories was that when they got into the ship a lot of the guys were seasick all the time and the way they had the system on the ship they were given different color cards for breakfast, lunch and dinner and a lot of the men didn't even want to see food. He met a sailor, a seasoned sailor, and he told my dad the secret is whether you're hungry or not you eat, you've got to have food in your stomach so his buddies that couldn't stand to see the food would say here, you can have my card, you can go eat so my dad was always making sure he had breakfast and because they were at a different schedule he would always have the right card so my dad never got seasick at all

and so they arrived in Europe. And my dad fought in Battle of the Bulge and they went into Europe and he actually crossed the line with General Patton and these were all men especially the medics they did not always stay with their group because they had to take the men on the truck which dad drove a truck and they would load the injured soldiers to the nearest hospital. They didn't have like they did in Vietnam with the medic tents and all that, they literally had to transport and my dad always said the hardest thing in a battle in that they were only given a few items sulfa, ah, and then injections for pain and gauze and that's the little packs that they carried on the side of their, ah, your uniform. So when he crossed the Rhine with General Patton, ah, he was with General Patton when they liberated Dachau which was a labor camp.

LB: A concentration camp.

LH: A concentration camp. And so he said that that was the hardest thing even seeing young men blown up or killed, that was the hardest thing and he said that Patton absolutely told down the line that he wanted pictures taken because of the cruelty that was done by the Nazi's to these people that were in the camps.

LB: The Jewish people in the camps.

LH: Um hum.

LB: Did he ever describe or talk about what he saw in the camps to you?

LH: Very little because he thought my sister and I were girls that we'd never understand that but as he matured, as my dad got older, he would talk to my husband and my brother-in-law about his time and how hard it was for him and how the war, he would lose sleep visualizing what he had seen, And very later in life he was able to go to groups with the veterans in Riverside and at the Loma Linda Veterans and he would encourage the

Vietnam veterans and the Korean veterans to talk about the war because he said that that was the best thing is to get therapy and then you could sleep and rest otherwise you can't do that. So he did get a little bit of help towards to end but he was encouraging other young men to do that but he was encouraging other young men.

LB: So what kind of training did he get as a medic or did he ever talk about his training?

LH: Well, he said that, you know, it was basic how to wrap a broken arm, a broken leg, ah, basic training, use morphine when it was beyond what they could do and basically he knew first aid before he went into the service because of working with the boys they always had to have a first aid so he learned from the Red Cross some of that training so I think that's why they utilized him as a medic because he did have the aptitude to be a medic. And he enjoyed the weather, the place because my mother traveled by train to meet him at San Luis Obispo when they were training so they got a chance to, and they always had fond memories of San Luis Obispo in California.

LB: How did, now to kind of backtrack, how did he, was it in the military that he came from Texas to California then?

LH: Yes, yes, because he was drafted and I assume that during the time they took aptitude tests. Now, remember my dad did not graduate from high school.

LB: Right.

LH: And that's where, you know, it gets fuzzy because he did attend high school not often but he did attend, that's where he knew my mother because they lived in the same area in San Antonio and he went, my mother graduated from high school and it was called Lanier High School it's still there, And my dad was the first, one of the first cheerleaders at the time when he was there at Lanier High School and I have pictures of him and they would

do cheers and this is before girls were allowed to be cheerleaders, this is when the boys were cheerleaders, and so he always had fond memories of being there but he never graduated from high school. Once to came back from, oh, and then, I'm digressing, when he went after Europe when the campaigns were over in Europe he was shipped home and then they shipped him out to the Philippines because there was still fighting going on. So they were shipped out to the Philippines and I got the impression it was more of a mop up but you never know how serious it was because the Japanese had not all given up at this point there was still a lot of fighting and so the war was over and he was sent back to San Antonio.

LB: So he was sent back to San Antonio, he was still in the military then?

LH: Yes, and then that's when he got out of the service in, let me see, what year was it, oh, December 1945 he was discharged.

LB: Okay, right, yes, December 6, 1945 it says, okay. And you mentioned your father did not graduate from high school, did he ever talk about any feelings of bias in high school or school?

LH: Just his own feelings of not having the right clothes and not having what other children had but after the service he and my mom built a house in San Antonio and he built it, he designed it and built it with bricks. He had help but he designed it and it's still standing, barely but it's still standing. And it's in my nephew's name now. In doing so we moved to the area and he was working at the Mexican Christian Institute with boys. He found out that there was some money from the government for the servicemen so he applied, he got his GED and went to the Trinity University and got his Bachelor's and his Master's.

LB: Oh, my.

LH: And I remember his graduation. I was a little girl and I remember his hat and the robe that he wore when he got his degree.

LB: So was that with the GI Bill then?

LH: Yes, correct.

LB: The GI Bill so it enabled him. Now, did—was he told about this, about the GI Bill or did he have to kind of find out about these benefits on his own?

LH: I think he had to find out on his own. He never talked about it but he had connections. There were people, you know, my dad was very social and he talked to people all the time that was his way. He got a Bachelor of Science degree and a Master's in sociology and so in the process I think some of the servicemen that he talked to they would inform him oh, guess what, this is what's going on.

LB: Okay, so—

LH: And he was injured, that's why he got the Bronze Star when he was in Europe. The truck he was driving, the vehicle in front because they were in a caravan, the truck in front of him was bombed.

LB: Oh, my.

LH: And it flipped over. The truck behind him got bombed and it was blown up. His truck because they lost control, it flipped over, so what he did is he checked on his buddy because they always traveled in two and then they started pulling out the injured men that were in the truck to put them in a safe place and that's where he got his back injured because he was trying to do a lot of this by himself but he saved quite a few men from being totally injured.

LB: And for that he was awarded the Bronze Star.

LH: He got awarded the Bronze Star, yes.

LB: And did have like the Purple Heart for his injuries or?

LH: No, no. And he just was so surprised that they even awarded him the Bronze Star because most servicemen of the time never felt that they deserved an award they felt that was their duty, that was their job to do what was expected of them which is a wonderful feeling to hear these men talk about some of the deeds that they did do because my dad had buddies and I would talk to them and they would talk about how humbling it was that somebody got the Purple Heart or the Bronze Star.

LB: Now, he was in Germany then?

LH: Yes.

LB: And was he ever in France or any other countries when he was—

LH: I don't think so, I don't, um, I know those are the two places that he talked—they probably crossing the Rhine I'm sure, um, you know, they might have but I don't—I know my dad talked very fondly of being under Patton. And I think Patton at the time was someone they respected. They didn't have to like him they just respected he was a good leader and I think that's the way my dad came across. And my dad and if you talk to many other servicemen of World War II they will say if the H Bomb hadn't been done there would have been more casualties more American soldiers killed and he always firmly believed that.

LB: So the atomic, the use of atomic weapons was—

LH: Was a necessary evil.

LB: Okay. And what else did he ever say about Patton. Now, you mentioned that he, that he was under his command, but did he ever have any personal interactions with him?

LH: No, no. My dad never said that, no, but he respected the man. There's a lot of people who because he slapped a soldier that a lot of people didn't respect him but my dad always said that he was a good leader and so and then that one of the things is taking pictures of the atrocities that were done to the people in Germany and, ah, you know, that we mustn't forget, that was my dad's thing that we need to educate so that it doesn't happen again because, you know, people can be cruel.

LB: Yes, yes. And he saw a lot of that in Europe.

LH: Yes.

LB: Did he mentioned, did he develop any close friendships while he was in the military?

LH: Yes, yes. As a matter of fact after my dad came back to San Antonio the jobs were not there especially for Latinos. They were not, um, asked to go to college. Now, my dad had a college degree but they were not paying him for the college that he had so he and my mother sat down, that's one of the neat things about I think my parents is that they sat down and talked okay, we're not getting anywhere here, San Antonio has a lot of different values and because my parents were not Catholic they were Christians they were ousted in a way in our community because there were mostly predominantly Latino Catholics. And so my dad says we need to move forward so my dad and my mother decided he was going to look for jobs elsewhere and this ring of elsewhere started to get bigger and bigger and my dad came to Riverside. Actually he came to San Bernardino and Los Angeles looking for a job as a social worker because that was his background and he was also looking for better pay for him and us and so he went to L.A. and they told him no, we're not hiring. Now, this is a man that came in a 1956 Chevy all the way from San Antonio to L.A., they told him to go to San Bernardino. Now, my dad was not familiar,

he says thank God for the road maps that he had, he went to San Bernardino and from there they said no but we hear Riverside is hiring.

LB: Oh.

LH: So he went from San Bernardino to Riverside and got an interview and it was the Community Settlement House and they needed a director and he had the qualifications for a director. So they hired him on the spot and we were still in San Antonio so he rented an apartment and he stayed there at the Settlement House before he got a place to stay and he loved the community. He loved working with troubled boys and he enjoyed meeting people and it was run by the United Way. So, yes, he had to answer to United Way but he started to make acquaintances with the mayor, city council, different groups and so he became well known. My mom, my sister and I came to Riverside and I went to high school, my sister graduated and she pursued also getting her education and myself. And we had, my dad bought a house there in the community but he started the Brown Baggers which they used to be the different leaders of the community and they would bring their sandwiches and they would have ways to communicate with the Latinos and the city and find jobs for a lot of these young people, the troubled boys. He worked well with Juvenile Hall, he got to know a lot of the judges because my father would get calls in the middle of the night oh, my God, they've arrested my son, what do I do, blah-blah, blah, my dad would make phone calls and they would get released to the parents with he has to straighten up his act so forth and so forth so my dad had a lot of hands-on in the community and he was well respected, well liked. And one of the funny parts about having my dad is we would sit down to eat and the phone would ring, some crisis, so we never felt we were competing as young women. We never felt that he was taking time

away because he devoted his time with his family and he was a part of the community. And everybody knew my dad, hey Jesse, hey Jesse, how are you and all this stuff. We would go to Universal Studios one time and somebody screamed across hey, Jesse, blah-blah and it was somebody from San Antonio that knew him.

LB: Oh, my goodness.

LH: And so whenever we went anywhere somebody would know him and so he was well known, well liked and I have very wonderful memories of my dad and he was a very good family man. I couldn't have asked for a better father, grandfather, my kids loved him, um, and, of course, he was a devoted husband and, you know, he got to meet his great grandchildren which is wonderful.

LB: Oh, that's nice. Yes, that's nice. So when he was, ah, did he speak Spanish?

LH: Yes, he was fluent in Spanish and he could read it and write it so could my mother. I, on the other hand, cannot read it or write it. I can speak but—

LB: Okay, are you fluent now?

LH: Ah, no. I'm more of a Tex Mex girl.

LB: Oh, okay, so that's interesting. So he did feel that there were more opportunities coming to California for Latinos?

LH: Yes.

LB: Than if he would have remained in Texas.

LH: Yes. And because he did apply at different jobs and I remember we'd sit down because my mother always made dinner we all sat down to dinner sometimes because of school and everything we wouldn't but when he was in San Antonio I remember him being very discouraged that the jobs were not there for Latino men especially with a college

education. I think the only thing that I remember him talking about was that there were positions open at the jails for social workers and he didn't want to do that. He wanted to work with troubled boys. His thesis—

LB: Before they got to the jails.

LH: Yes. And his thesis was on, when he graduated with his Master's, his thesis was on troubled boys.

LB: Do you think that was from his work at the CC?

LH: Way back, uh huh, CC Camp. And he said that that was a learning experience for him to go into the service because he saw men that were cuddled by the parents so when they were in the Army they couldn't handle some of the chores that they had to do and dad had no problem and he always said, you know, he ate whatever was given to him whether it was, and excuse my French, but they used to call it shit on a shingle which was, you know, meat that they never knew what it was and so he ate—he ate that, he said as long as I had food I was okay. So I never had trouble with my stomach or that, you know, because he saw a lot of his buddies having difficulty and he attributed it to learning at CC Camp how to survive, how to make your bed, how to do your laundry, how to wash your socks. He says that was part of his learning that he was able to survive in the Army.

LB: Did he talk about other Latinos in the military or in the Army or?

LH: He had a combination of people because when he moved back to Riverside they used to have reunions and he would go to some of the reunions and he would always talk about the servicemen being boys because that's the way he remembered them as being boys, of course, now they were all elderly and, ah, but he had connections with them. When he passed away he was very active in the VFW.

LB: Oh, okay.

LH: Kiwanis, um, which other one, oh, he was very, very active in, um, let me see, oh, I think I digress, he was very active in, um, I can't find the paper, but he was very active with the Kiwanis, the, um, American Legion.

LB: Oh, American Legion, okay.

LH: He was a member of the Disabled Veterans of America, League of United Latin American Citizens.

LB: Oh, okay, so that was LULAC then.

LH: Yes.

LB: And what did he, how did he happen to—did he join that in Texas or here?

LH: No, he joined here in California. He was real active in California more so than in San Antonio. I think the opportunities were different here in California. He was also, ah, Mexican American Political Association known as MAPA, M-A-P-A.

LB: Okay.

LH: And he, Toastmaster's.

LB: Oh, my.

LH: And he was with the Mexican American Golf Association of Riverside.

LB: Oh, organizations I've never heard of but this is interesting.

LH: Yes, and, ah, and as a matter of fact let me see was it the LULAC, they worked very hard at getting scholarships for the students at the local area, the community colleges and so he was real active in doing that because he says the only way for a lot of the Latinos was to get educated and move forward and come back and help in the community.

LB: And that was from maybe his own experience, too.

LH: Yes, correct, yes.

LB: Now, LULAC has been very, I mean was he a member of LULAC in Texas?

LH: That was way in the 1960's, um, no, he never joined over there. Um, LULAC kind of went in a different direction after many years. My dad kind of said, well, you know, it's not my thing anymore and so he kind of let that go and with retirement he was not as active but he was still—after he retired from the Community Settlement House they went through I don't know how many different directors and sometimes they didn't have a director so they would call and ask him to come and help out a couple of days a week. And then what he did for the veterans is he did a wall with pictures of the servicemen in World War II that served there in Riverside.

LB: Oh, and that was at that—

LH: The Community Settlement House.

LB: Okay, Community Settlement house, is that still in existence?

LH: The Riverside Community Settlement Association is now there and, um, we were active helping them coordinate with the director and then he left as Riverside County Mexican American Historical Society because they had a lot of archives and the president and myself wanted to archive all the information that they had of the Settlement House. We also with RCMAHS we were able to designate the Community Settlement Association as historical because it is made of adobe.

LB: Oh, interesting.

LH: So I kind of kept up with dad's legacy a little bit.

LB: And what was that acronym again?

LH: Riverside RCMAHS.

LB: RCMAHS.

LH: Riverside County Mexican American Historical Society.

LB: Okay.

LH: It's still there I just had to stop going to Riverside a lot and we did a lot of honored veterans. We also helped with the parade in Riverside, the Veterans Parade. I wore a t-shirt with his picture on it and a lot of people felt that that was such a unique thing because they would come and talk to me, a lot of the veterans from World War II and even Vietnam veterans and we did a banner. The Riverside Cemetery, the National Cemetery, we did a banner honoring veterans from all wars and we would put it on a truck and we would have veterans come especially Vietnam veterans because they finally had the thank-you's that they never received so I was a part of that. And dad started that, dad started it.

LB: Oh, that was nice, my goodness.

LH: And so, yeah, my dad was real active and very community oriented and so it rubbed off on my sister and I.

LB: Um hum. Well that's, I mean you've done a lot—you've done a lot to carry on his legacy that he started.

LH: And were hoping RCMAHS would somehow have a museum for the Latinos because it's been, ah, recorded that they've been here forever.

LB: Right.

LH: And we would want something to honor Sotelo, my dad and, you know, other people that have had an important role in the community.

LB: And so that's what—

LH: That's what our goal was.

LB: Yes.

LH: But I just kind of had to step back but who knows what the future holds.

LB: Right. Now, when he passed away was he interned at Riverside?

LH: National Cemetery, yes.

LB: National Riverside.

LH: And the veterans, the VFW, just took over all the service. They found a really nice area for his service. One of the veterans from the VFW played taps and he felt it was an honor to play for my dad.

LB: Oh, my.

LH: And the Women's Auxiliary did the flag ceremony which they folded and they handed it to me. My sister was there but they knew me. I guess my dad did talk a lot about me and so I have his flag and, um, after he passed away I brought all his information everything that was his in his home and I have it in safekeeping. I would love to have it in a special place that I know somebody will take care of it. I think my granddaughters will honor that but I want to make sure that Riverside has access to all this. My dad was interviewed by Riverside and there is a disc and the sound is awful and I'm waiting to see if I can find somebody because they interviewed him outside of the Settlement and the noise, the traffic, the trucks is real bad and I'm sure in a year or so somebody's going to come up with taking care of all that loud noise and listening to his life story because they asked him about his life.

LB: Oh, I see.

LH: I have a disc.

LB: You have a disc and how is it? What kind of format is it in, do you know?

LH: It's on a DVD type of disc.

LB: Okay, so but there is a lot of like external sounds, though.

LH: Yes, that needs to be cleaned up.

LB: Oh, well, we can do that.

LH: And then we also have a disc from the Grier Pavilion that talks about dad and I have it. If you ever find somebody that wants to make a copy of it because I paid for my copy so I have that. Also of his, ah, and everybody that was honored at the Grier Pavilion.

LB: Okay. Now, you mentioned this Sotelo. Now, I saw his picture, who was, ah—

LH: He was the first Latino councilman in Riverside. I know a little bit about his history. He and dad, he and dad had political differences as most people have but towards the end after Mr. Sotelo retired my dad retired they became close. His daughter had a son that was injured and is in a wheelchair and he was a young man, I think he was in elementary school when he got injured, had a spinal injury, so my dad would go over there and teach him woodcraft, leather crafts to get him motivated to move his hands and stuff and his daughter and I we're both in RCMAHS and they honored Mr. Sotelo. The old junior high that my husband I went to in Riverside used to be University Heights Junior High and it is now a community center and they honored Mr. Sotelo by naming one of the areas after Sotelo.

LB: Okay, so that's very interesting. So your father really was, became quite prominent then.

LH: Um hum.

LB: Now, you mentioned he, your father had used his GI Bill to get his Bachelor's and his, well, GED, Bachelor's and—

LH: Master's.

LB: Master's. Now, did you and your sister were you able to use the GI Bill—

LH: No.

LB: —provisions for a family?

LH: No.

LB: Did they have that?

LH: I don't think they did at the time.

LB: At the time? Because I understand now that they can.

LH: Oh. No, we didn't. My sister got her teaching credentials for kindergarten but she married an architect and so she didn't have to work so she volunteered a lot of hours. I got, ah, I went to college but I had kids so I stayed home but I worked a lot of years helping my husband go through medical school. And I got medical assisting, I was teaching medical assisting but, um, you know, life happens and I was able to retire as a homemaker in 1988 and then I've been—

LB: Busy since, as busy if not busier than going to a job every day.

LH: Than if I had, yeah. Sometimes I kept thinking it was easier to go to work and come home and make dinner instead of doing all the things and all the meetings.

LB: Yes. Bet that's interesting.

LH: Yeah, there was a really nice obituary that they did on my dad and here is a copy that you can—

LB: Okay, would you like to read it or anything like this?

LH: Oh, sure, yeah.

LB: And I'll have you read it for the tape and then we'll see if you would—I have one other question and then, I know you mentioned all the Latino veterans or just the veterans groups not necessarily Latino veterans but he was in some Latino veterans groups now I know that some veteran groups have like say a Latino caucus, was your dad ever in a group like that?

LH: No, as a matter of fact talking to the veterans and my dad including Mr. Sotelo because Mr. Sotelo was in the Navy and so they, when they came back from the war in Riverside there was an organization for the veterans and I think it was American Legion and what happened was when they all came back from the service after World War II they all tried to join and they were told they could not join because of their skin color.

LB: Oh, really.

LH: In Riverside.

LB: In Riverside. Even though they were all military—

LH: So remember this was—

LB: And what year was this?

LH: Well, this was after World War II so it must have been 1945, 1946.

LB: Okay, alright.

LH: As a matter of fact the house that is mine in Riverside which was my parent's, ah, that community they were not, Latinos were not allowed to buy a home there even if they were buying it through the GI Bill or through money from the GI. So they had to fight to buy homes in the east side which is a community predominantly Latinos now, it was a mixture then after the war. But they built these little homes and my dad bought a house from the original owner and he fought to buy a home, that particular house, because he

was Latino. So getting back to the American Legion it was, um, almost outside of Riverside it's on the way to San Bernardino I think it's now called Grand Terrace and they were not allowed to join the Latinos even if they had served in the service. So they were discouraged. And after the 1960's they were able to branch out and join others and I don't know what happened to the original American Legion that's there I know they have a post there now but I don't know what happened and because my dad wasn't involved at the time because my dad didn't move out here until 1959 I don't know what happened in the late 1940's or 1950's. And then when my dad came to Riverside he was able to join but he already had heard about how many of the Latinos were turned off by joining the American Legion or the Veterans of Foreign War but when my dad did join after in the 1950's, the late 1950's, he was welcomed with open arms. And I think that he also broke a lot of barriers. My dad and I think I mentioned that my dad was brought up in a Christian church, a Protestant church, we used to go to Protestant church, my mother, we all were baptized in the Protestant church. When he moved to Riverside he used to, he joined up the First Christian Church and it was Brockton and I think La Sierra, a beautiful church. well, my dad has always believed because he saw a lot of blood and goriness as I said, he always felt that it didn't matter because we all bleed red so we never knew color differences. We grew up feeling everybody has a heart, everybody feels, everybody has their feelings hurt and so forth. So my dad expressed that to the people around him that we're all the same. He went to this Christian Church and we joined and then the board—he got on the board at the Christian Church and they were not allowing a black man to join because he was black. So what my dad did is he resigned, he says if he can't be here neither can I and the bottom line is you're being prejudiced and he left, he resigned from

that church and he let everybody know that that's what this church was teaching and that's not what the Bible teaches us. So he had some very strong feelings about we're all equal.

LB: Very good. And in closing is there anything else you would like to add?

LH: Oh, you want me to—

LB: I would love you to read and this is his obituary?

LH: Yes, this is the obituary from the Press Enterprise and it says: "Ybarra, Jesse R. age 90 of Riverside passed away on 4-13-07 due to complications of pneumonia at Riverside Community Hospital, Riverside. Jesse was born September 18, 1916. He was director of the Riverside Community Settlement House and retired in 1981. He was also a social worker in San Antonio at MCI, later known Inman Center. He was a PFC medic corps from 1942 to 1945 and received the Bronze Star for valor and braver, Good Conduct Medal, European Campaign Medal, Pacific Campaign. He attended Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, and received his Bachelor of Science and Master of Sociology. He received the Distinguished Service Award from the Board of Supervisors and Friends of Mission Inn. He was a living symbol of community strength and involvement. He received the State of California Volunteer of the Year and Harlan Hall Awards. He was a member of Kiwanis Club, LULAC, Toastmasters, life member of the Mexican American Golf Association of Riverside, Mexican American Political Association, life member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, American Legions, Lincoln Boxing Club, Brown Baggers. Jesse is survived by two daughters, Azalia Hardy, Texas, Luana Y. Hernandez, California. Sister survived, Magdalena Luna in Texas." At the time my dad had three grandchildren, four great grandchildren and it has visitation at Preston and Simons Mortuary on Mission Inn and graveside services at 4/19, 11:15 a.m.

the Riverside National Cemetery assembly area number seven. In lieu of flowers family requests memorials to Riverside Community Settlement House on Bermuda.

LB: Thank you, Luana.

LH: Thank you.

LB: I thank you and this has been most interesting and I appreciate your time and all of this information. This has been wonderful so thank you.

LH: Thank you.

[Second part picks up in middle of sentence]

LH: —my mother and her friends to a certain block area and then my dad made sure, you know, and then they went and the girls went home because they traveled, a lot of times my grandmother would go with my mother. So this time my dad and his friends went in one direction and the ladies went down the other and all of a sudden my dad is walking and he hears one of the girls screaming Jesse, Jesse, they hit Thalía and my dad goes what so his friends and him turn around and come running. A car had hit my mother and knocked her on the back and she fell, knocked her down. Apparently they didn't run over her but knocked her down and the driver was drunk. And so my dad comes running and makes sure my mom's okay and, of course, all these people are gathering around their friends and my dad tells the man you better take her to the hospital because she's hurt and the guy was drunk and he says no, I'm not taking her. My dad just went [swish], knocked him on the face, fell in the mud, dad said he fell in the mud, dad picked him up and said are you driving her to the hospital—yeah, I am, I am.

LB: Did he have any kind of formal boxing training or anything?

LH: He must have, he must have learned something in maybe CC Camp because he, that's where he learned a lot. He says that he felt that probably toughened him and educated him in many ways and he was always so grateful to CC Camp and he lied about his age because you had to be 16 and he was 14.

LB: And no one checked.

LH: And he used to send his mother—my dad said that he would keep I think it was like a dollar or a dollar fifty and the rest he'd have sent home but he could buy sodas and chips and stuff with the money he had. So, you know, he sacrificed a lot for his family and, you know, it's hard to describe what a good dad he was. It's really hard because I feel so fortunate that I had great parents and you hear horror stories about other people and I'm going, gee, it wasn't so bad and we never knew we were poor. My mother used to sew our clothes, I always had new dresses. We had shoes before school started and at Easter time because it had to be white. And so we always—my sister and I always laugh we go, you know, it's hard to believe that, you know, we were ever poor. We ate well, we never, you know, did without. My mother made sure that, you know, she would sew dresses for our first day of school, second day of school and we never knew we were poor.

LB: Well, that's—I mean that shows, you know, that they were really, ah—

LH: Good parents.

LB: Good parents and conscientious.

LH: And made sure that we did our homework and, you know, my mother was very active in PTA and so and she was a stay-at-home homemaker but, you know, I never—I never had to cook, I never did dishes.

LB: Oh, my.

LH: I didn't do laundry. I was a princess so was my sister. In fact my, ah, her husband, my brother-in-law, Roland, when they were dating he'd come over and my mother would say would you like to stay for dinner and he'd say oh, yes, I think he never refused. And he would smell the pot roast cooking or a roast or something and he'd sit down and when he married my sister he goes are you going to make that famous pot roast that your mom made—I don't know how to cook. She never learned how to cook.

LB: Oh, dear. Now, did you have like a lot of Spanish food or were there a lot of Spanish traditions in your house or cultural, ah—

LH: It was, no, as a matter of fact we laugh because they used to tell us oh, do you eat tacos and we'd say no, what's that because my mother had cooking classes and so she made sure we had vegetables. She made sure that we had the right, you know, foods and we grew up healthy and then living in San Antonio growing up we used to have the best cuts of meat because we had a butcher and this meat was slaughtered right in San Antonio.

LB: Locally, right, yeah.

LH: So when we came to California the meat tasted different. But, you know, culturally it's different. When I came to California and was dating my husband he'd say let's go get some chili rellenos and I'd say okay so we'd go and get chili rellenos when, you know, we were out and about going to the movies or something and I'd look at that I said that's not chili rellenos, he goes yeah, that's chili rellenos I said that's chili I'm used to a bell pepper with hamburger meat in egg.

LB: Oh, okay.

LH: So I had a different—

LB: A whole thing.

LH: Different than here.

LB: Interesting.

LH: And the tamales and the enchiladas were different. His mother would make us great enchiladas but I always used to, in San Antonio, the tortillas are red, they actually have the chili in the tortillas and then you would warm them up. I remember my mother she'd warm them up in oil and then she'd sauté onions and then put cheese in it and wrap them up that's what we called enchiladas. Here it's all this sauce and I could never figure that out. And the tamales, my mother never learned how to make tamales. My grandmother is the one that used to make the tamales so I learned from my grandmother because—and the tortillas I never knew how to make tortillas, I asked my mother-in-law to teach me. My mother-in-law used to make tortillas this big.

LB: Oh, my.

LH: And oh, they were so good. And my mother used to make tortillas that were this big.

LB: Little tiny ones, saucer size instead of plate size.

LH: And thick, thick tortillas that you could actually rip it in half. My grandmother owned a molino in San Antonio when I grew up and so I was used to gorditas, the little corn tortillas that are fat and you slice them and you put meat or cheese or whatever you want in it and you eat them and they're delicious. So when I make tamales, I taught my granddaughters to make tamales, we make gorditas because we have all this masa and then I slice them and then we put meat in them and we make a small batch of tamales, we don't make a lot, we make a little. One of the fond memories, the girls were little, they were like junior in high school, my parents would come and I'd say I'll make you tamales, we'll be there. Well, we're having, you know, a cookout, we'll be there. my parents

always came. And my dad would love to watch the girls making the masa and there was masa flying and chili flying and everything but they were learning. And my dad says the best part is you make gorditas at lunch so I'd say—he'd say is it getting close to lunch, I'd say I'm making gorditas and so he would just love—like I said he never complained about food, you know, like it needs salt or this, he never complained to my mother at all. So I have a lot of good memories.

LB: Yes, you do, Luana, and thank you. I love that story.

END OF INTERVIEW